

Memorial Day remembrance

More than 1,400 honor American servicemembers who died in World War II

By MSgt. Donald S. Martin
Public affairs

As Air Force people observe the 50th anniversary of their service this year, another more solemn observance took place Monday at the Cambridge American Cemetery near Maddingly with the annual ceremony that honors American servicemembers who died in World War II.

More than 1,400 British and Ameri-

can veterans, active-duty members and their families attended the service, according to Maj. Rusty Sackett, ceremony project officer. Featured speakers included Her Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Cambridgeshire James G.P. Crowden, and 3rd Air Force Commander Maj. Gen. Tad Oelstrom.

"I am so pleased that in the midst of all our Air Force birthday ceremonies and celebrations that we have taken a few moments to reflect on those who are memorialized here in the peace and

beauty of this place, beneath these well-tended gardens and greens, in this beautiful English countryside," said the general.

While most active-duty people at the ceremony were Air Force members, the general noted the cemetery honors all American service members.

"Here, perhaps more than any other place, I am reminded I have inherited a proud tradition of service," he said. "They have given us so much: a legacy of freedom, a legacy of valor."

More than 1,300 Americans are buried in the cemetery overlooking the Cambridgeshire countryside, and 5,126 names are listed on the Wall of the Missing, including the Medal of Honor recipient for whom Vance AFB in Oklahoma is named: Lt. Col. Leon R. Vance.

American service members first arrived in Britain in 1942, but the decades that have passed have not lessened the impact of their sacrifices, according to the lord-lieutenant.

"For over 50 years, families in your great country have lived with the loss of the men whose names are inscribed on this wall and buried in this cemetery," said Crowden. "Nothing can bring them home as your country grieves for them. But you have this to comfort you: That without their sacrifice, this country would have lost all her places, our own Cambridgeshire, for instance.

"I ask you to remember that the debt we owe to these men is not forgotten on this peaceful day, with clear skies above us."

As with previous memorial services at the cemetery, World War II veterans paid their respects with a mass wreath-laying ceremony. But not every veteran then saw active service during the war.

One person who's attended most of the annual services at the cemetery since the end of World War II was too young to serve during the war.

"I was a British air cadet during the war, and I actually flew with (the 338th Bomber Group) as an air cadet," said George Stebbings of Rickingham. "So I've got maybe a world record because I was actually able to fly the B-17 (at the age of 14). It was training."

He explained his air cadet squadron was adopted by the 338th, and that gave him the chance to fly.

"This is why I'm here today with my wife (Margaret)," he explained. "I've

never forgotten the Wall of the Missing every year.

"It's emotional, it's better than the ceremony, as tears in your eyes. 'You can't rub it out of your mind.'"

One British Chainey attended the memorial service seven years, and half a century ago.

"Look at the wall," he said. "It's well known."

Time may be passing, but the importance of the service members' sacrifice is not dimmed. The memorial service at the cemetery, Churchill once called America's "special day," seems to remain Stebbings.

"It's the best of all worlds, trying to bring the world together,"



Photo by TSgt. Carl Schlesinger

Above, 48th Security Police Squadron members give a 21-gun salute. Right, SrA. Steven Burdine, 48th Medical Group, talks with World War II veteran Otto Meikus, 91st Bomb Group representative.



Photo by TSgt. Sam Shore



Maj. Gen. Tad Oelstrom, 3rd Air Force Commander, lays a wreath on the Wall of the Missing.

World War II

those people.”
of the Missing is one
why he and his wife return

al. You can’t (describe)
at,” he said of the cer-
began to well up in his
an see the guys that I
rs with on this wall.”
ish veteran, James
y of Cambridge, has at-
rior service for the last
d said that even after
it’s worth doing every

crowd here today,” he
attended today I’d say.”
e marching on, but the
of honoring fallen
s doesn’t seem to have
impact of this kind of
vice on what Winston
described as Britain and
pecial relationship” also
in strong, at least to

way we keep our coun-
he said.



Photo by MSgt. Scott Martin

Above, Alan Kirwan (wear-
ing beret), parachute regi-
ment, and to his left Bernie
Robinson, Royal Air Force
Association, pay tribute af-
ter laying wreaths at the
Wall of the Missing. Left, a
visitor to the cemetery reads
the inscription on one of
the markers.



Photo by TSgt. Sam Shore

Oelstrom, 3rd Air Force
ays a wreath at the Wall
g during the ceremony.



Photo by TSgt. Sam Shore

On the Cover

TSgt. Eric Reed, 488th Intelligence Squadron at RAF Milden-
hall, and an American Legion Auxiliary veteran look at the
day’s itinerary prior to the Memorial Day ceremony.

Photo by SrA. Robert Gerlach